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## Asian Forest Scorpions (*Heterometrus spp.*)

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### **Old World Goliaths**

Asian forest scorpions are a genus of large, stocky, heavy bodied scorpions consisting of about 33 known species. Color typically ranges from a dark, glossy black or brown, to sometimes greenish with a reddish or lighter colored telson, limbs, and/or pedipalps in some species. Asian forest scorpions are among the largest species of scorpions in the world, and are primarily burrowing to terrestrial. They are a commonly kept species of scorpion in the pet industry due to their size, docile nature and relatively mild venom, and have in recent years replaced the emperor scorpion to a large degree in availability in the pet trade as a similar, docile, large, heavily built scorpion species with relatively low toxicity. As with many other scorpions, Asian forest scorpions also contain properties within their exo-skeletons that enable them to glow a turquoise bluish-green under a fluorescent UV light. These scorpions also possess additional sensory hairs on their claws, legs, and tail that enable them to detect the vibrations of potential prey through the air and the ground.

### **Taxonomy**

**Life:** All living, physical, and animate entities

**Domain:** Eukaryota

**Kingdom:** Animalia

**Phylum:** Arthropoda

**Subphylum:** Chelicerata

**Class:** Arachnida

**Order:** Scorpiones

**Family:** Scorpionidae

**Subfamily:** Scorpioniae

**Genus:** *Heterometrus*

**Species:** *Heterometrus spp.*\*

*\*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

### **Lifespan and Longevity**

Asian forest scorpions can attain longevity of 5 to 10 years or more if cared for correctly.

### **Distribution and Habitat**

The Asian forest scorpions are a relatively medium sized to large genus of scorpions indigenous to tropical to sub-tropical regions of southern to southeastern Asia, with more precise ranges dependent upon the species. However, members of this genus generally occur from Cambodia,

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Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam to India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and portions of China. Within this range, these large scorpions occupy the semi-dry, tropical to sub-tropical forests, woodlands, and savannahs, as well as occasionally grasslands, where they occupy self-excavated burrows, burrows constructed by other animals, and underneath vegetation, rocks, logs, and other ground debris.

### **Conservation Status**

Not Evaluated for the IUCN Red List (NE) or otherwise Data Deficient (DD).

### **Legal and Regulatory Status (\*Subject to Change)**

Consult with your local, municipal, and state ordinances and regulations for any ownership restrictions.

### **Experience Level Required**

Novice/Beginner to Intermediate/Moderate.

### **Size**

Asian forest scorpions are medium sized to large scorpion species, reaching anywhere from 4 to 6 inches on average.

### **Housing and Enclosure**

Provide a sturdy, secure, and escape proof terrarium or enclosure 5 to 10 gallons in size with a secure top for one or two adult scorpions. Several of the acrylic displays and enclosures that are now manufactured for housing arachnids, insects, and other invertebrates can also be used. Asian forest scorpions can be kept communally provided sufficient enclosure space, food, and other resources. Acceptable substrate to use can include slightly moist pesticide free potting soil, cypress mulch, coconut fiber, or similar substrates 3 to 4 inches in depth. Decorations and/or other cage furnishings and hide boxes, cork, or bark slabs can also be included as well for additional retreats that these nocturnal to crepuscular and secretive scorpions prefer. A fairly small, shallow water dish can also be provided, and should be cleaned regularly. Maintain humidity at 60 to 80% with some sphagnum moss as well.

### **Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity**

Most species of scorpions have simple and undemanding heating and lighting requirements in captivity, and do not require additional UVA/UVB lighting, although providing it can be greatly beneficial for your scorpion's health, immune system, and overall wellness. Asian forest scorpions do best at room temperature between 80 to 85 degrees. For any supplemental heating that may be needed, use a low wattage incandescent or UVA/UVB bulb, radiant or ceramic heat emitter, or UTH (under tank heating element). More specific lighting, heating, and humidity product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

### **Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition**

*Insectivorous to Carnivorous*; In the wild, Asian forest scorpions are primarily insectivorous, meaning they eat insects and other invertebrates. They will also occasionally eat smaller vertebrates as well if they can catch and subdue them. In captivity, these scorpions can be fed a variety of appropriately sized feeder insects such as crickets, roaches, mealworms, superworms, and waxworms. Feeder insects should be gut-loaded in order to increase their optimal nutritional value. Any uneaten food items should be cleaned and removed after a day or two. Their feeding frequency will depend on the age, size, and overall health of your animal. Use care as to not

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overfeed even invertebrates, as obesity and other health related issues can still become an issue with them. More specific dietary and supplementary product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

### **Handling**

Asian forest scorpions are typically a docile and slow moving species, but may be more readily apt to sting if provoked or disturbed than the more docile emperor scorpions, but can be handled carefully so as to avoid injuring the scorpion and handler. Scorpions are fragile animals, and accidentally dropping one can result in the rupture of its internal organs and/or exoskeleton, causing death to your scorpion. Although the Asian forest scorpion's venom is relatively mild and weak, with most being lesser than or just about equal to a bee sting, medical attention should still be sought from any apparent allergic reaction to a sting from this or any scorpion species.

\*\*Also be sure to practice basic cleanliness and hygiene associated with proper husbandry after touching or handling any animals or animal enclosures to prevent the possibility of contracting salmonellosis or any other zoonotic pathogens\*\*

### **Contact**

Authored by Eric Roscoe. For any additional questions, comments, and/or concerns regarding this animal, group of animals, or this care sheet, please email and contact the Madison Area Herpetological Society at [info@madisonherps.org](mailto:info@madisonherps.org)

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